



VOICE OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

VANI

Voluntary Action Network India

an apex body of voluntary organisations

celebrating 25 years...

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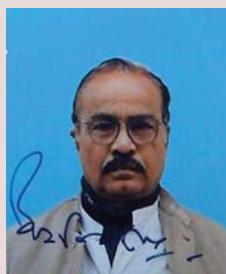
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## Editorial

**Dear members, associates and friends,**

### Greetings from VANI!

As the age-old axiom goes, change seems to be the only permanent thing in life. When situations and the environment in which we operate keep changing, it calls for corresponding adaptive responses from our end as well.

This is the reason why we have decided to introduce some changes to the strategy of communication in VANI. These changes echo the sentiments expressed by various VANI members and well-wishers both formally and informally through various consultations, meetings and the Annual General Body meeting. In addition to this, our communication strategies were subjected to independent external evaluation and review.

### What are the changes?

1. As you will see, we have changed the format of Civil Society Voices (CSV). These changes are introduced with an objective to bring in more richness and variety to the magazine. More space to reflect the voice of the voluntary sector and its leaders are now envisaged. We will also try to share the critical issues that the sector faces from time to time with perspectives and analysis. In order to reflect the voice of the civil society per se, we would like to introduce and rename the magazine as 'Voice of the Voluntary Sector' as this is what we can aim for at the best. We have also learnt that a gap of three months is too wide to make it relevant and contextual. Hence, we will have this issue released in every two months.
2. As you might have already noticed that VANI's communication at present is not limited to a set of periodic and time-bound publications or releases, instead we do try to reach out to our audiences as situation demands. Whenever there is a new development or an issue that crops up which concerns all of us, we make immediate arrangement to reach out to all of you. This has made us realize that monthly newsletter has only a repetitive value as it echoes what we have already communicated to you. Therefore, we will now combine both the newsletter and the Civil Society Voices into one – Voice of the Voluntary Sector.

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# Ministry of Home Affairs cancelled FCRA registration of more than 4000 organizations

— **Binu Sebastian**

Voluntary sector in India seems to be flung back and forth between varied issues, the latest one being the mass cancellation of FCRA registrations. Approximately 4100 organizations have been affected by this 'clean up' programme by the Ministry of Home Affairs. VANI has prepared a state wise list of organizations that have lost their FCRA registrations and you can access them by logging on to our website.

## 1. Possible Reasons

By and large, the following factors were cited as the reasons behind such a move from the Ministry;

- **To weed out the dormant and non-complying organizations:** It is generally said that out of 40,000 registered organizations only 20,000 report. The FCRA department reviewed the cases on the basis of returns filed during the period between 2005-06 and 2006-07, and sent notices to such organizations. Those notices which were returned were considered for de-registration.
- **Non-submission of returns**
- **Change of address and not updating the address details with the ministry**
- **No reasonable activity for the last two years**

## 2. Response

Business as usual, response to this move by the Ministry has been mixed. While the intent of such a drive was not subjected to intense scrutiny, the manner with which the Ministry carried out the drive drew flak from various corners.

### 2.1 From a Legal Perspective

Financial Services Management Foundation (FMSF) prepared a communique questioning the legality of such a drive by the Ministry. In its note, it cites the loopholes in this process from a legal perspective.



Frist of all, the right of the organization to be heard before being penalized is being violated. Further, it goes on to elaborate the reasons as to why such a move does not stand the test of law.

1. *Under section 14 of FCRA 2010 the registration certificate can be cancelled under specific circumstances and not responding to notices cannot be a reason for cancellation, particularly when such notices were not served due to change of address.*
2. *Not responding to notices, at best, can give a right to pass ex parte or unilateral orders, that to if it is conclusively proved that the notices were served and proper opportunity of being heard was provided.*
3. *Even when an ex parte or unilateral order is passed, the reason can only be one of the five specified in section 14. Not responding to notices is not a reason which can be used U/s. 14. In such orders, the FCRA department should cite the formal reason of cancellation.*
4. *It has been noticed that the FC registration of those organisations, who have been regularly filing FC-3 or FC-6 returns, has also been*



cancelled inspite of the fact that the returns and financial details are available and can be viewed at website of Ministry of Home Affairs, [www.mha.nic.in](http://www.mha.nic.in). Therefore, it is a self-defeating argument that such organisations are incommunicable or untraceable. Such organisations have also formally (with evidence) sent hard copies of the annual returns.

5. It is also understood that most of the organisations whose address was changed have formally intimated and sent hard copies of such change of address. These organisations have in their possession the evidence of such intimation. The change of address has to be made through hard copies only.
6. When action is required to be taken against a mass group of people or entities, it is the responsibility of the government to provide public notice in newspapers in case it is unable to communicate on individual basis.
7. There are instances of numerous NPOs who also had received such notices regarding non filing of FC-3 or FC-6 returns. In most of the cases, it was found that such NPOs were regularly filing returns and no action of cancellation was possible. Therefore, all such proceedings were dropped.

(Standards & Norms, Legal Series  
Vol. V, Issue 5 August 2012 03)

2.2 Secondly, the tenacity with which the Ministry carried out the process of mass cancellation of FCRA registrations has naturally raised the eyebrows of many. Was it driven by a pure intent to 'clean up' the sector by removing the dormant and fly by night organizations that sprang up to capitalize on a particular law or situation? It is not just the Ministry; even the voluntary sector itself is inclined towards any constructive process to weed out the 'bad elements' that have brought down the credibility of the sector to a considerable level. It is to be admitted that many 'charitable' organisations sprang up taking recourse to the weak and antique legal framework for the incorporation for charities and they have inflicted a considerable amount of

damage to the entire voluntary sector attracting a multitude of questioning from across the stakeholders.

However, it is to be doubted whether the state has used these reasons as a shield to target the voluntary sector. Is it a reflection of State's backlash at the sector as it had taken on government on various policy-related issues in the past? If this was not backlash, why was no due diligence followed during the entire procedure? Was it not the infringement of the basic right of the aggrieved organization to get a space to share its side of story? The context, timing and the manner of the entire process point towards reasonable doubt that there might be something which is beyond just cleaning up.

### 3. Implication

**3.1 Genuine organizations have been affected:** In the absence of following a clear strategy before taking up a drastic measure, the Ministry ended up disrupting many genuine organisations. Many have stated that they were affected irrespective of submitting returns on a regular basis. Many organisations were caught unaware and do not know how to go ahead with their activities. Make no mistake that there are a number of people who draw their salary from their association with charitable work and not being able to draw money from the bank did have an impact on many lives.

#### 3.2 Other Implications

##### a) Vesting of FC Asset.

- i) The bank balance with designated bank account shall vest with the concerned bank;
- ii) The bank balance in other operational bank account and other FC asset created out of FC fund shall vest with such authority as may be prescribed;

##### b) Management and use of FC fund by the concerned authority:

If it is considered necessary and in public interest, the concerned Authority may manage the activities of the concerned NGOs for such period and in such manner, as the Central



Government may direct and concerned authority may utilize the foreign contribution or dispose of the assets created out of it in case adequate funds are not available for running such activity.

- c) No fresh application up to three year:** Any person whose certificate has been cancelled shall not be eligible for registration or prior permission for a period for three years from the date of cancellation.

#### 4. VANI's intervention

- 1. Information Dissemination:** After VANI noted the list on the website of FCRA department of MHA, the information was immediately conveyed to the members and other contacts of VANI.
- 2. Mobilization:** VANI also called a small consultation of some senior persons including CA, financial consultants, and lawyers and affected VOs in Delhi on August 14, 2012. Almost 30 people participated in this meeting which was called on a very short notice.
- 3. Meeting with Shri Jitender Singh Hon'ble Minister of State for Home Affairs** on 10th July 2012 to discuss the mechanism for regular conversation between Senior Officials of MHA and leaders of Voluntary Sector.

- 4. Delegation to the Minister:** Along with Sh. A.V. Swami (MP and VANI member), Vinod Bhanu (CLRA), Aditya Patnaik, Sh. Harsh Jaitli, CEO, VANI met Sh. Mullappally Ramachandran, Minister for State (Home) on August 24, 2012, to discuss the issues and problems related to FCRA.
- 5. Meeting with the Joint Secretary:** On August 27, 2012 meeting with the Joint Secretary (FCRA) to understand and discuss the problems.

#### 5. Outcomes of these processes

Through these processes, VANI learnt that;

- This is part of an attempt of FCRA department to weed out dormant and inactive FCRA registered organisations. It is generally said that out of 40,000 registered organisations only 20,000 report.
- Since it is one sided action, wherein the other party was only attempted to contact through postal address which might be wrong, the ministry has agreed to review cases through bona fide representation. Also, the accounts have been frozen which will naturally cause hardship to the affected organisation; the ministry is urged to speed up the process of restoration.

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#### Why the changes?

As we have already shared, this is an effort to make our communication more content-rich and contextually relevant. We would also like to make our publication more participatory with varied perspectives and analysis as we hold the view that our horizon of learning should not be limited to any particular set of thinking or ideology. As VANI represents the voice of the voluntary sector, its voice too needs to be as multifaceted as the sector is. We are well aware of the daunting task of achieving this target; however that shall not persuade us from trying to chase this target.

#### We solicit your sustained support

We are pleased to present the improved version. We continue to look forward to your views and suggestions. We earnestly request you to go through our first edition, and send your feedback. We are of the opinion that we need to treat our first couple of editions as 'experimental efforts' so as to incorporate further changes and improvements.

We look forward to hearing from you,

In solidarity,

Editorial Team





## FAQs

### 1. What could be possible reasons for the mass cancellation of FCRA accounts?

**Ans:** Though there are no specific reasons given by the Ministry, the following could be the ones;

- If you have changed your address and if you failed to update the same with the ministry,
- If you have failed to file the returns,
- If you have not carried out any reasonable activity for the last two years,
- If there was any unfavorable report against you by any investigating agency,

### 2. Our organization has been filing the returns regularly; still our license has been revoked. Why?

**Ans:** It is true that some genuine organizations have also been affected by the clean-up drive by the ministry. However, the ministry has agreed to review their appeals provided you send a formal review appeal to the Ministry.

### 3. Our registration is cancelled; can we still operate our FCRA bank account?

**Ans:** Yes, you can operate your bank account unless there is any order to the contrary. You can operate your account for meeting regular expenses and the transaction should be made only by cheque/bank money and not by cash

### 4. Our FCRA registration is cancelled; can we receive the second installment (FCRA money) for the project that we are already running?

**Ans:** No. You cannot receive the second installment unless you are cleared by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

### 5. Can I send an appeal to the Ministry for the review of their decision?

**Ans:** Yes you can send an appeal and the Ministry is bound to reply to you within six months.

#### References:

*E Communiqué - Financial Management Service Foundation  
SRRF Dialogue*



# MULTI STATE SOCIETIES REGISTRATION BILL, 2012

## Salient features and responses from the voluntary sector

— *Binu Sebastian*



### Background

Indian voluntary sector is governed and regulated by the rules laid down during the pre-independence period. Those rules remained same irrespective of the sweeping changes in the way in which developmental activities are perceived and carried out.

In August 2011, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs had constituted the group to study the legislative and regulatory architecture of the Societies Registration Act, 1860, governing the functioning of societies in India. The Societies Registration Act, which is administered by the corporate affairs ministry, is like a model act that has been adopted by the states.

The Ministry has constituted an Expert Group to study

the legislative and regulatory architecture of The Societies Registration Act, 1860 governing the functioning of societies in India and also to study the ground situation with respect to the operation of the said Act so as to identify the regulatory gaps and oversight mechanism with a view to formulate a Model Law on the subject. The Expert Group has submitted its report to the Ministry on July 5, 2012 proposing a legislation titled as 'Multi-state Societies Registration Bill, 2012'. The Report and the proposed Bill has been uploaded for ready access at the website of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs viz. [www.mca.gov.in](http://www.mca.gov.in).

### Objectives

The main objective of the Proposed Bill is to provide for more enabling regulatory environment for multi-state



societies with transparency and accountability in the governance of multi-state societies as its ultimate objectives. The Proposed Bill also emphasizes on the self-regulation of societies, which the Expert Group views as critical for the governance of societies operating in the new economic environment.

**TO CREATE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT** towards the functioning of societies by:

- Recognizing the enhanced economic significance of societies in the modern economic environment;
- Providing them the necessary regulatory support to attain financial sustainability;
- Maximizing their capacity to innovate and venture into new projects; and
- Enhancing their potential to harmonize individual enterprise and collective goals.

**TO INSTILL TRANSPARENCY** in the functioning of societies and the decision-making process thereto, both internally as well as towards third parties, by:

- Allowing access of all non-confidential/sensitive information regarding the society to its members;
- Ensuring participation by the members in all critical matters affecting the society;
- Requiring certain societies to upload their organizational information on the internet; and
- Reserving certain matters for a decision by the members only.

**TO ESTABLISH ACCOUNTABILITY** for the actions of societies, which would also include a broad-based social audit of the society's activities, by

- Identifying and allocating liability to the Governing Body as well as other key functionaries/officers for actions of the Society;
- Providing for a review mechanism of the decision of the Board of Governors on an identified number of members objecting to such decision;
- Formulating and prescribing accounting standards for large societies; and
- Implementing oversight mechanism to measure the actual social impact of the activities of the society.

**TO PROMOTE SELF-REGULATION** of Societies by

adopting a regulator with light-touch approach, by:

- Mandating submission of records/details/filings to the regulator and encouraging digital submissions for maintenance of an online system such as MCA-21;
- Requiring periodical submission/updation of records;
- Providing for corporate governance standards for management/functioning of the Society;
- Establishing efficient reportage and notification mechanism; and

**TO MODERNIZE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK** in order to present Societies as a viable business/non-business corporate entity, by:

- Recognizing Society as a Corporate entity;
- Categorizing Societies that need to be registered with the State or at the Central level;
- Providing the regulator with a power to collect information;
- enabling search, seizure and summon of information by the authorities from any Society;
- Regulating the membership size and number of Societies established by a single person or group of persons;
- Expanding the ambit of activities that can be performed by a Society; and
- Providing for administrative rule-making in order to provide flexibility to update the subjective legal requirements with the passage of time.
- Shifting from traditional penalties to a graded-offence/default model, with the regulator issuing improvement notices, warnings, suspensions/fines and cancellation

### Salient Features

1. **Provides for Mode of formation of Multi-State Societies:** Like the present Act, the proposed Bill provides that any seven or more persons associated for any literary, scientific or charitable purpose and who conduct or plan to conduct inter-state activity may form a Multi-State Society.
2. **Clause 4 of the Proposed Bill provides for compulsory registration of multistate societies:** Failure to obtain registration is an offence punishable under the proposed Bill.



3. **Transition:** A transition of twelve months have been prescribed for all societies registered under Societies Registration Act, 1860 for registration under the proposed bill (Clause 4). Failure to fulfill this requirement would be a punishable offence.
4. **Chapter II provides for Mode of reporting activities by Multi-State Societies to the Registrar:** Clause 13 requires every multi-state society to annually report a list of the names addresses and occupations of the members of its governing body and a report on their activities indicating the nature and extent of inter-state activities.
5. **Chapter II provides for Mode of dissolution of Multi-State Societies:** The Proposed Bill provides for two modes of dissolution for a multi-state society viz, a) voluntary; and b) compulsory.
6. **Chapter III provides for Mode and manner of conduct of Inspection or enquiry into affairs of the Multi-State Societies:** Chapter III of the Proposed Bill provides the power to the Central Government to call for information, or order inspection of the society in public interest or when such information/inspection is necessary for the purpose of enforcement.
7. **Chapter III provides for Mode and manner of conduct of Investigation into the affairs of a multi-state society:** As per Clause 36, the Central Government has the power to investigate into the affairs of a multi-state society on receipt of a report of the inspector appointed under the Act or on receipt of a complaint from a member or key managerial personnel officers of the multi-state society or a member of the public that the multi-state society is not conducting its affairs in accordance with its Memorandum of Association and/or rules or in a manner oppressive to its members.
8. **Chapter IV provides for Central Government power to take over the affairs of a multi-state society:** As per Chapter IV, the Central Government has the power to take over the affairs of a multi-state society, if it is of the opinion that the affairs of a multi-state society are being conducted or are proposed to be conducted against public interest.
9. **Habitual Offenders:** Under the Proposed Bill habitual offenders are very strictly dealt with. Under Clause 12, if a society has furnished false or misleading documents for obtaining registration or has failed to comply with the provisions of this act an 'improvement' notice will be served on it.
10. **Chapter V provides for the penalties provided for offences:** The Proposed Bill adopts a graded approach to offences, providing regulators with the ability to issue 'improvement notices' or 'suspend registration' for non-compliance and prescribing penalties as a last resort.
11. **Chapter VII provides for Mode of formation of foreign society:** The Proposed Bill contains provisions on foreign societies under Chapter VII. A foreign society is defined as a society or other association of individuals incorporated outside India within the meaning of Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999.

### Response to the proposed bill

By and large this move by the ministry was welcomed by the voluntary sector. Voluntary sector itself has been demanding for a piece of legislation which will have better frameworks for incorporation of charities in the country. The voluntary sector has been at a receiving end as it has been governed by the rules laid down during the colonial period. Such an antique and old fashioned legal framework had lost its relevance today and in this context, the proposed bill was a much awaited one.

However, voluntary sector appears to be very cautious as well and it has come out with some constructive responses to the bill. Below is an analysis of the bill by Financial Management Service Foundation (FMSF).

1. **A common law and framework for entire country is needed which is not provided in this bill :** The MSSR Bill, 2012 is not addressing some of the





existing problems issues which are as under :

- Currently NPOs can be registered as a Society, Trust and Section 25 Company. In all the 3 forms there is no legal bar in having branches for activities outside the state. Each state provides the registration for its own jurisdiction which cannot exceed the state territory. However, any charitable organisation whether registered or unregistered can work anywhere in the country subject to any compliances applicable in the state or place of activity. Therefore, the Multi State Societies Registration Bill will add yet another form of registration which will continue to remain unregulated.
  - The MSSR Bill, 2012 is silent about the existing Trust, Section 25 Company & various Waqf Board, Religious Endowments etc. which implies that it will not be a Central Body for the entire range of charitable or religious organisations.
  - The MSSR Bill, 2012 is taking geographical presence as a yard stick for organisation of National Importance. In our understanding working in one or more state does not make an organisation any less or more important. Moreover, Civil Society Organisation are privately managed institutions and all organisations have an unfettered right to work anywhere in the country. For instance if there is an earthquake in Gujarat then all individuals and entities have a right to extend their help. The geographical yard stick will create problems such as; (i) If an organization donates for a calamity in another state does it become multi state. (ii) If an organisation is doing research of national importance in one state does it become eligible for registration under MSSR Bill, 2012. (iii) An organisation working at a mass scale or with huge turn over in one state will it become eligible for registration under MSSR Bill, 2012. Therefore, it is important that the multi-state concept should be revisited and it may be re-coined as organisations of national importance/presence. The proposed Act may be called National Not for Profit Organisations Registration Act, 2012 .
  - There is a need for a single regulatory authority for all the charitable and religious societies of the country. All the existing Societies, Trust, Section 25 Company should be asked to apply for registration under the proposed MSSR Bill, 2012.
  - The MSSR Bill, 2012 may provide a financial limit beyond which an charitable organisation shall be entitled to register under MSSR Bill, 2012. Otherwise all NPOs which have registration under Central Statutes such as Income Tax Act, 1961 and Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, 2010 should be asked to get themselves registered under a Central Statute.
  - The MSSR Bill, 2012 under section 4 provides that interstate activity will be treated as offence. Such provision is unnecessary and will not cover charitable or religious organisation registered otherwise then as society. The more appropriate way should be to link MSSR Bill, 2012 with Income Tax and FCRA registration as discussed above.
2. ***The MSSR Bill, 2012 under Section 5 provides that there can be no activity pending registration :*** The MSSR Bill, 2012 requires existing societies to be registered but surprisingly it provides that during the period of registration all operations shall be suspended which is in practically and legally not feasible.
  3. ***The MSSR Bill, 2012 under Section 10 provides that registration will not be granted in the absence of Multi State Activity:*** A society may not have activities at the time of registration because the law is not enabling for unregistered groups to have activity as considerable scale. Any provision providing powers of rejection at that time of inception will be counterproductive.
  4. ***The MSSR Bill, 2012 under Section 26 provides that a society may be dissolved by Government even for failing to amend its rules for 3 months:*** Under the section various provisions are provided for dissolving a society, which includes that a society may be dissolved for failing to amend its rules within 3



months on receiving direction from the Government. It has to be understood that the proposed act itself will be the binding law and any serious action can only be taken on violation of any provision. The private existence or non-existence of any provision should make any difference.

5. **The MSSR Bill, 2012 under Section 28 provides that the Government will decide the beneficiary organisation in case of dissolution:** A Society or a Trust for public purposes is a private institution for public purposes, which implies that unless funded by government, societies are private institutions. Therefore, the right to decide the beneficiary organisation, in the event of dissolution, should remain with the members of the society.
6. **The MSSR Bill, 2012 under Section 34 provides that the investigation can be initiated on recommendation of its inspector:** Such provision will provide arbitrary powers to the Inspectors and will breed harassment and corruption.
7. **The MSSR Bill, 2012 under Section 36 provides that the investigation can be initiated on recommendation of a single member of the society :** Such provision which provide that a single individual can initiate investigation should be provided with safeguards by defining proper procedure and basis of such investigation.
8. **The MSSR Bill, 2012 under Section 37 provides power to the inspectors of investigating suo motu or on complain from anybody:** Such provision which provide that an inspector can initiate investigation should be provided with safeguards by defining proper procedure and basis of such investigation. Such provision will encourage inspector raj and corruption.
9. **The MSSR Bill, 2012 under Section 42 provides that the Government may constitute a new board or take over the society without providing any opportunity of being heard :** Such provision irrational and unfettered powers provides the power

to the government to take over or interfere into the management of any society and its whim.

10. **The MSSR Bill, 2012 under Section 48 provides that the Government will allot Unique Identification Number to the Board Members and Governing Body:** Such provision irrational are unnecessary, the PAN, Voter ID etc. may be used. For technical purposes digital signature may be used. A person may be on the board of multiple societies which will create further confusion.

**Source: Analysis and Recommendations Multi State Societies Registration Bill, 2012, Financial Management Service Foundation**

#### Concluding remarks

There is no second thought about the necessity to have a modern law of incorporation for the voluntary sector in the country. As mentioned earlier, the sector had already begun to bear the brunt of the antique legal framework which was governing the sector. Besides this the voluntary sector has been demanding a forward-looking and progressive bill that will address its issues in a comprehensive manner. In the past, many unscrupulous elements have taken resource to the loopholes within the existing legal framework to carry out their nefarious activities under the disguise of charity and this had inflicted a terrific dent on the credibility of the voluntary sector. Consequently, there have been clamours from around the corner to control the sector with harsh rules and regulations. In this scenario, a forward looking and progressive bill is undoubtedly the need of the hour. However, it is extremely important that the state keep the purpose with which the bill is proposed, ie to create an enabling environment for the sector. On the contrary, it should not be used as a tool to exercise stricter control over the sector depriving of its innovation.

#### References:

Multi-State Societies Registration Bill, 2012  
*Analysis and Recommendations Multi State Societies Registration Bill, 2012, Financial Management Service Foundation.*



## Leaders Speak

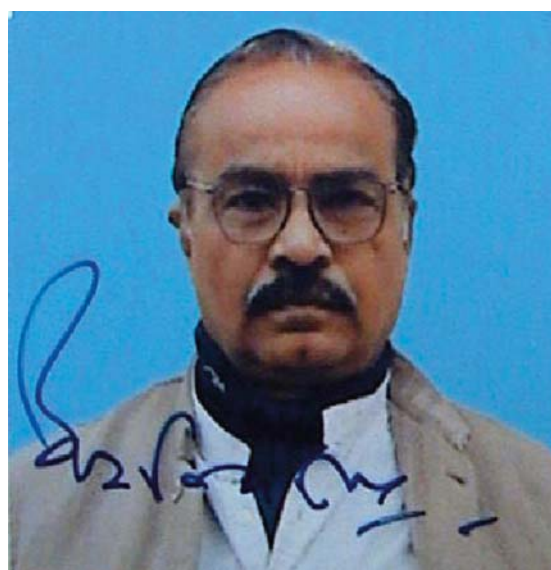
***Mr. Arbind Kumar has been the Secretary of Lok Jagriti Kendra for years. He has been active on the issues of livelihood and other developmental issues. He is an active member of VANI and contributes immensely to its mission in various capacities. Here he shares his involvement with the voluntary sector and the vision he holds for the sector.***

### **1. What was your person vision for the society that drove you to this sector?**

Lok Jagriti Kendra is a non-profit voluntary organization, registered under the Bihar Registration Act 1860 and Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA). It is originated from the movement of Total Revolution initiated by 'Lok Nayak Shri Jai Prakash Narayan' in mid 1970s.

The birth of Lok Jagriti Kendra (LJK) was contextual to the situation prevailing during the 1970's in the country. Finding that the malaise of exploitative forces and corruption in all spheres of society had taken deep roots and the political set-up was unable to address the issues effectively, Loknayak Jai Prakash Narayan sounded the clarion call of 'Total Revolution' in an effort to bring about a sea-change in the entire spectrum, Responding to his call, a number of youths, mostly college going, joined the campaign. One group of like-minded youths armed with education, the elements of 'self rule' as espoused by Mahatma Gandhi, the political thoughts of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, and the concept of Local self-Governance spear-headed the revolution in the Coal Mines at Baskopi (Bihar) in 1977, which was the starting point of LJK in the area, albeit as a loose group, not a formal NGO.

To deal with local problems at the local level and spread the need of social change throughout, LJK started intervening in villages having a majority of Dalits and Tribals, While it emphasized the need for a society free from exploitation, and the establishment of 'Democracy' and 'Decentralization' in the true sense, it also highlighted the plight and issues of the Tribals to collectivize them into the mainstream.



### **2. How do you perceive that vision is getting materialized?**

Lok Jagriti Kendra endeavor to achieve its vision of building up a society free from marginalization, deprivation by securing human rights and preservation of natural resources, on the concept of Equity is promoted". As a result, the overarching mission is "to form people's organizations and motivate them to enjoin other small and marginalized communities to promote an environment-friendly and people-centered development".

In turn LJK during last two and half decades is trying to generate a peoples endeavor to bring about a social change to alleviating poverty and environmental degradation which are mainly man made. For the purpose its strategy is to mobilize committed social and technical organizations, individuals and application of



helpful constitutional provisions by way of creating people's pressure and advocacy. It has also benefited people by doing several works on water conservation and ground water recharge and for these developmental services

Lok Jagriti Kendra is working with a mission of eco-friendly people centered development of the marginalized through the formation of people's organizations, promoting and strengthening people's initiatives in shaping their lives, build collaboration among the small initiatives (CBO, CSO initiatives) in the region and strengthen local self governance

### 3. In your opinion, what future holds for the voluntary sector in the country?

In my opinion voluntary sector to develop new models of development, intervene with policy-makers to frame appropriate policies and develop requisite schemes,



***Its strategy is to mobilize committed social and technical organizations, individuals and application of helpful constitutional provisions by way of creating people's pressure and advocacy.***

provide guidance and directions to others and do advocacy with the policy makers to frame policies which are favorable to the communities.

### 4. How do you see the role of voluntary sector today? Do you have any suggestions to make?

Keeping Vision in mind, organization formed groups and associations at the local level to obtain people's participation and strengthened them to establish a Civil Society. This Civil Society supports the process of development which expectedly will go a long way in the



creation of a strong society.

- Voluntary sector should be created and have a separate identity without the help of Government machinery.
- Voluntary sector's members should accumulate knowledge about Government rules and regulation.
- Voluntary organization should be establishing voluntarism concept in the country.
- In the modern period the funding agencies concept does not match with voluntary organization concept, they work with their hidden agenda or pressure from corporate sector.
- No recognition to the voluntary sector by the Government.
- According to the work and activities of voluntary sector it is recognized as fifth filler in the country.
- Why do the voluntary sector accumulate fund from foreign country, why not Government allocate separate fund to the voluntary sector.
- Gandhian and Lok Nayak Jai Prakash thought should be merging in the nature of voluntary sector.

Voluntary sector is not an enemy of government but it is part of the development process.





## Status of State – Jharkhand

— *Ratna Manjari*



The twenty-eighth State of the Indian Union came into existence by the Bihar reorganization Act on November 15, 2000, the birth anniversary of the legendary Bhagwan Birsa Munda. The State is known for its rich mineral resources like the Uranium, mica, bauxite, granite, gold, silver, graphite, magnetite, dolomite, fireclay, quartz, feldspar, coal, iron and copper.

### The State of Voluntary Organizations

Post-Independence, the region witnessed the social reform based voluntary organizations. These organizations joined together with the government's responsibilities and acted as extension agents. The educational institutes, health facilities were established in remote areas. Institutes like Xavier Labour Relations Institute (XLRI) was established in Jamshedpur and Xavier Institute of Social Service (XISS) at Ranchi with the objective of training young men and women and later registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 in 1973. The failure of government community development programmes in the 1960s and 70s led to the rise in

alternative ideas in the society. Post JP movement left many restlessly looking for constructive alternatives to find means to create just and equal society. As a consequence to it, the voluntary organizations saw a change both in terms of quantity and its approach to development processes. The focus shifted from providing philanthropic services to people's participation and development of the marginalized sections of the society. The decade of 1980s witnessed a rise in the trend of people from specialized disciplines who united together to work for the emancipation of the remote tribal population. The congruence of the social and scientific milieu helped the organizations to become more organized which further increased their recognition and visibility.

Thus it can be seen that the nature of volunteerism and voluntary organizations has strategically shifted according to the changing scenario of the nation and the State. The next three decade saw the rapid growth of the Voluntary Organizations.



### Present Context

After the formation of the State in 2000 the voluntary organizations already registered received notices from the registration department regarding re-registration of VOs with the Jharkhand Registration department. The year 2006-07 saw a sharp rise in the registration of VOs and by 2010-11 about 1505 VOs were registered.



***Voluntary organizations largely depend on the external support from external agencies with the change in the funding pattern of the agencies; it has become difficult for the VOs to sustain themselves without the external support with more professionalization.***



### Themes and Issues on which the VOs are engaged in

Voluntary Organizations of the State are operating in the array of Issues and themes and touch all the spheres of life and mankind.

1. **Health** – Community health services, health education, health check-ups, camps, reproductive and child health care (RCH) and HIV/AIDS
2. **Livelihood** – Vocational training, skill development and employment generation programmes.
3. **Educational** – Non formal education, formal education, adult education, computer education
4. **Gender** – Activities related to women’s rights, women’s empowerment, formation of women SHGs.
5. **Economic** – Micro finance, micro credit, economic development, land and forest rights activities.

parameters which include professional human resources, administration units,

- **Local vs. Global:** Most of the VOs of the state are currently working on local issues which find active participation of the local communities involved. However, the external funding partner influences it to work on macro issues which find little acceptance in the community.

Another trend which has become increasingly visible in the recent years is the growing harassment of the VOs by the State, its agencies, law and order machineries as well as vested interests.

### Challenges faced by the Voluntary Organizations

- A. External Challenges
- B. Internal Challenges

#### A. The external challenges faced by the sector are

1. Funding
  2. Local vs Global
  3. Networking
  4. Advocacy and Lobbying
  5. Corruption
  6. Naxal disturbances
- **Funding:** Voluntary organizations largely depend on the external support from external agencies with the change in the funding pattern of the agencies; it has become difficult for the VOs to sustain themselves without the external support with more professionalization. The VOs have to maintain certain

- **Networking:** The VOs come together on a common platform to share information, knowledge and address common issues. Various networks like Sajha Manch, Sukhaad Virodhi Abhiyan, Swakshik Manch, etc. has been formed in the past. One of the common features of all these networks has been that they have been led by few organizations which have larger presence in the State or the Country and the networks are provided by some external donor agency. But after few years, when the funding support is stopped, these networks cease to function. In such situations the small VOs feel cheated.
- **Advocacy and lobbying:** The VOs working in the State work on different critical issues which require advocacy at different levels. The outreach of the VOs is however restricted. Garnering support from all the quarters is a stiff challenge for the society. Further,



there is always a chance of buying trouble with the vested interests.

- **Corruption:** Like elsewhere in the Society, the VOs too face the fraudulent behaviour in different departments. In such a situation they find themselves at cross roads and often confused whether to relent in or fight the unjust.
- **Naxal Disturbance:** Most parts of the State is disturbed by Naxal violence. In this context the functioning of the VOs becomes a challenge. Although, the grass root VOs claim that they do not face the threat from naxal violence but this is also true that the mobility of the staffs of the VOs are affected and they always live in a state of fear.

## B. Internal Challenges

- **Skill Gap :** A large no. of VOs of the State is facing the skill gap within the organisation which has a detrimental impact on the organisation itself and its employees or volunteers. Increasing expectations from voluntary organisations to function as high performing entity combined with changing working practices and high turnover rate makes it difficult to recruit, retain and train a fully skilled workforce.
- **Physical Assets and Infrastructural facilities:** There is no denying fact that physical assets and infrastructural facilities available with VOs are

determining factors for smooth functioning of the organizational activities. Barring a few VOs of the state, most of the VOs lack the basic assets and infrastructural facilities. Many of the organisations of the State run in the residential premises in the houses of its founding members.

- **Information & Knowledge Gap:** The organizations which have its location in the remote areas or those with no or very little presence in the rural areas face the challenge of being informed and updated. Remote located VOs lack the access to outside information regarding the new development in the policies, available funding opportunities, etc. Similarly, there are VOs which do not have adequate information of the grassroots, the local dynamics, and local resource base. This creates a gap in developing a people oriented perspective.
- **Organizational Structure:** The structure of the Organization and its ability to adopt change is a deciding criterion for its functionality in the long run. A large no. of VOs is facing the difficulty to adopt changes within its structure to withstand the change.
- **Transparency Within:** Greater transparency has been a contentious issue with all the institutions. VOs too today face a challenge to make its fund and functions transparent. While the VOs welcome the move of becoming more transparent simultaneously



they face a challenge from vested interests.

- **Leadership & Power Issues:** The issue of power relations in the Voluntary Sector and Voluntary Organisations of the State are seldom talked about as a challenge. Yet there have been voices within the organization about the democratic functioning and the power relations within the organization. It is often said in low voices that the decisions are all made by the chief functionary of the VOs and others are mere doers. Further, change in leadership is very limited. Hence, it becomes a challenge for the VOs to function in a more democratic way.

### Conclusion

- The State govt. should form a committee from different academia and VOs and bring out a State policy on the VOs. It should be ensured that the relationship between the funding and the implementing partner is horizontal and not in a vertical relationship.
- Voluntary Organization should become more transparent in its functioning. This will help to boost its image in all the sections of the society.
- The Voluntary Organizations should conduct their organizational analysis from time to time and adapt to the changing environment.
- All the actors of development should coordinate with each other in their work and not just point fingers to the wrong doings. The VOs need to take a step ahead in this direction as they have always been the torchbearers in the society.

### Demand from the Government

1. To do away the planning of Standard Module
2. Organizations should make their own design and get approval on this basis
3. Routine monitoring and day to day intrusion and interference should be stopped
4. There should be more than fifty per cent representation of organizations in the government committee.
5. In the government development programme at least ten percent allocation should be reserved for the organizations.
6. The organization related law like FCRA, Income Tax,

small loan, labour related laws should be made more flexible and convenient.

7. The State and the central government committee should select the organizations for carrying out any programme in which fifty percent members should be from the organizations.
8. After three years of grant of funds the condition of curtailing the funds should be taken away and for such organizations the grant should be given in accumulation of large organizations.
9. The organizations should be freed from Lok Pal Bill.
10. At the state and centre level a separate department should be formulated for voluntary organizations and get the grant under single window system.

### Suggestions for the Organizations

Organizations should make themselves independent and self-sufficient; take up more work of service delivery and reduce the advocacy and awareness generation activities; strengthen and make rules in accordance and favour such that they can do advocacy with the State and build pressure on them.

### Recommendations and future policy

1. The voluntary sector needs to be organized
2. A charter of demand should be formulated and meetings organised.
3. One needs to chalk out the funding pattern and the position and stand of the government at the national level
4. There should be proper follow up and action plan and the voluntary organizations should think of their benefit
5. The grass root level and rural based organizations have different level of problems and mindset. They are few member based organizations and hence the board's requirement is quite different.

**(Based on the citizen's charter research work and workshops organized in Jharkhand State)**





# Changes in the Landscapes of Funding and their Implications on the Voluntary Sector

## (Abstract from the research on Indigenous Resource Mobilization for the voluntary Organizations: Options and Challenges)

- **Re-arrangement of priorities in the scheme of things:** Many people observe this as one of the challenges that the voluntary organizations have to effectively deal with. In the emerging context, where VOs have to increasingly look at the corporates and other sources for funding, they are compelled to align their priority areas in line with the prospective donors. Very often it happens that in the process of this re-alignment of the priority areas, the organizations can move away from this original vision for which it was formed. This process of distancing from its vision and mission can have a long term impact on the organizations as it can lead to ambiguity and aloofness.

For e.g., in the last couple of decades, there was an unprecedented emphasis from the side of VOs on right based entitlements for the citizens. During this period the civil society took up the systemic issues and monitored the policies and programmes of State very closely. Subsequently many questions were raised against the state regarding the ways and means in which it planned and implemented developmental interventions. Now the question would be, can similar level of activities be supported by the corporates and individuals?

- **Ambiguous future:** In the absence of long term funding for many welfare programmes, voluntary organizations can become unsure of their future sustenance. This ambiguity about future can have serious repercussions, right from affecting the morale of its stakeholders, particularly staff to the efficacy in planning for the long-term interventions.
- **Compromising on values and principles?** One may not be able to make a categorical statement that VOs are compromising on their professed values and

principles in order to match with the requirements of the prospective donors. Nonetheless, it has been observed that a certain level of 'readiness' in terms of compromising with some of them has become a trend as survival has become the topmost priority. Therefore, the question to what extent the sector is equipped to handle this situation is very pertinent one.

- **Competition among the voluntary organizations:** The phenomenon of 'more demand and less supply' has resulted in creating a competitive mentality to the voluntary organisations to access the limited available funds. This competitive mentality need not necessarily lead to a healthy process where the organization strives to strengthen its institutional fabrics, but can also lead to a sense of rivalry and 'out of the box' ways to access those available resources.
- **Greater demand for accountability and transparency:** with the rise of non-conventional funding, especially with individual giving, there comes an ever increasing demand to 'perform' and bring out 'tangible' results. This ever increasing demand for transparency and accountability has broadly two implications;
  - a) **Have many of voluntary organizations, especially those medium sized and small, a well-established institutional mechanism to ensure that they adhere to the principles of transparency and accountability?** It is a known fact that it is not enough that mere willingness to be transparent and accountable is not enough, but it has to be supported by a support system which involved adequate human resources, technical capabilities etc.
- **The demand for 'expertise', 'professionalism' and 'proficiency' in the subject matter:** There is trend that many of the corporates equipped with up to date technological advancements expect similar level of professionalism from the voluntary organisations. How

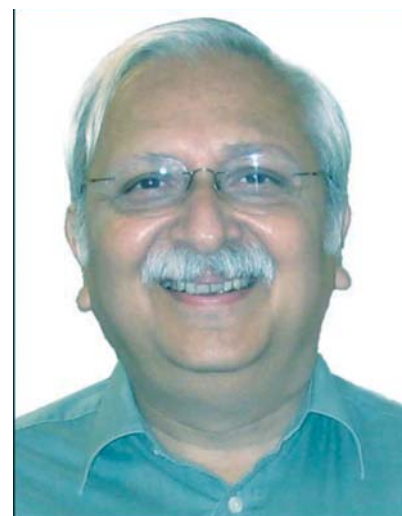


far is the capacity of many of the VOs to meet with these requirements is yet to be seen.

- **Demand for 'highly skilled labor' has gone up:** Voluntary organisations, especially while dealing with corporates and government funding, need to comply with complex demands of documentary requirements. Very often, many of the voluntary organizations do not have the required level of skills needed to meet these requirements.
- **Increasing role for 'consultants' and 'middle level players':** With the onset of government's tendering system to 'outsource' the projects to VOs, there is an increasing trend of mushrooming of consultants and middle level players who pledge to fill the gap in skills in accessing these funds. One is not sure what would be the possible implications of such a trend to the voluntary sector. Can it pave way for more room for corruption and other malpractices?
- **Focus on thematic areas Vs focus on systemic and macro issues:** With the rise in non-conventional funding, to what extent the voluntary sector can leverage support for its macro level interventions is yet to be seen. Individuals and corporates tend to support certain thematic areas that have an appealing element, like old age care, children's welfare, disability etc. It will be hard for the voluntary sector to find support for advocacy, research and other related activities which deal with the larger systemic issues of development.
- **The role of private philanthropy as catalyst for social transformation is uncertain. How catalytic can be the private giving in India?** Lalitha Vaidyanathan, FSG's Mumbai Managing Director writes "Indian philanthropy needs to be laser-focused on those key interventions that can effect large-scale change at the systems level – in other words, they need to be highly Catalytic"

**Dr. Rajesh Tandon, President, PRIA has the following to say** "What mechanisms and policies are needed to incentivize and channelize increased donations to causes that make our democracy work for all citizens? India lacks a modern institutional infrastructure that can professionally channel individual donations to such efforts

*that promote freedom, equity and justice for all Indians today. Archaic laws and practices for incorporation of civil society organizations and restrictive fiscal policies and legislations do not encourage making or using such donations; section*



**“India lacks a modern institutional infrastructure that can professionally channel individual donations to such efforts that promote freedom, equity and justice for all Indians today. Archaic laws and practices for incorporation of civil society organizations and restrictive fiscal policies and legislations do not encourage making or using such donations; section 2(15) of the Income Tax Act recognizes welfare and charity alone; not social transformation.”**

*2(15) of the Income Tax Act recognizes welfare and charity alone; not social transformation. There are now moves under the proposed Direct Tax Code to eliminate provisions that can provide financial sustainability to civil society organizations. India needs to translate into laws, systems and procedures many valuable principles enshrined in the National Policy on Voluntary Sector (2007). It needs professionally managed community foundations that provide 'venture capital' to underwrite the risks associated with experimentation for innovative solutions; it needs professional education programmes for preparing social development professionals; it needs to encourage youth leadership and engagement in transformative philanthropy”.*



## News You Can Use

### SC refuses to stop GM crop field trials

The Supreme Court refused to pass an interim order restraining the Centre from going ahead with open field trials of the GM crops for the coming Rabi season. The decision is significant in view of a recent recommendation by a committee appointed by the court to stop all open field trials of such crops for 10 years until a new set of conditions is enforced.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/sc-refuses-to-stop-gm-crop-field-trials/1023726/>

### House panel wants NGOs, trusts out of Lokpal ambit

The highly publicised anti-graft watchdog, Lokpal, should specialise in probing corruption cases of "bigger magnitude" and not be clogged with complaints against NGOs and charitable organisations, a parliamentary panel set up to examine the bill is set to recommend.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/NewDelhi/House-panel-wants-NGOs-trusts-out-of-Lokpal-ambit/Article1-949604.aspx>

### PM constitutes National Committee on Direct Cash Transfers

<http://www.thesynthesist.co.in/news-details.php?id=71>

### Indecent Representation of Women Act amended

Key amendments proposed are as follows:

- Broaden the scope of the law to cover the audio-visual media and material in electronic form.
- Penalties to be enhanced to a maximum of three years of imprisonment and fine of between Rs.50,000 to Rs.1,00,000 for first conviction, and imprisonment of not less than two years, but which may extend to seven years, and a fine between Rs.1,00,000 to

Rs.5,00,000 for second conviction.

- Police officers not below the rank of Inspectors authorized to carry out search and seizure, in addition to State and Central Government officers authorized by the State or Central Government. Indecent Representation of Women Act amended

<http://www.igovernment.in/site/indecent-representation-women-act-amended>

### National Urban Health Mission gets green signal

Government gave its nod to the ambitious National Urban Health Mission, a dedicated public health delivery system to address medicare challenges in town and cities, with focus on the poor living in slums.

[http://zeenews.india.com/news/health/health-news/national-urban-health-mission-gets-green-signal\\_19160.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/health/health-news/national-urban-health-mission-gets-green-signal_19160.html)

### Toilet must for every school in 6 months: SC

The Centre and all state governments have six months to provide drinking water, toilets and other basic infrastructure to all schools — government or private.

The Supreme Court also said that all its previous directions for providing infrastructure to schools be implemented within a timeframe.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/NewDelhi/All-schools-must-have-toilets-within-six-months-Supreme-Court/Article1-939148.aspx>

## Global

### The 2013 World Social Forum will take place in Tunis, March 23rd to 28th

<http://www.ong-ngo.org/en/the-2013-world-social-forum-will-take-place-in-tunis-march-23rd-to-28th/>



## Canada quits Kyoto Protocol, first nation to do so

Canada, a major energy producer, has become the first country to quit the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, saying the 1997 accord was an "impediment" on cutting global carbon emissions with top emitters like the US and China not covered by it.

<http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/canada-quits-kyoto-protocol-first-nation-to-do-so/152808/on>

## Forced evictions on the rise in China, Amnesty International says

The rights group's report says millions of poor and working-class Chinese have been displaced for building projects, often sparking violence and deaths.

<http://articles.latimes.com/2012/oct/12/world/la-fg-china-evictions-20121012>

## IMF warns of fresh global crisis unless eurozone finds a fix

The International Monetary Fund has urged Eurozone leaders to act swiftly in response to the debt crisis in Greece and Spain, or risk dragging down the global economy with another financial crisis.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2012/oct/08/imf-warns-global-crisis-eurozone>

## WHO Identifies Key Health Issues for Post-2015 Development Agenda

**October 2012:** The World Health Organization (WHO) has released a discussion paper identifying issues to be considered in the context of potential global health goals for the post-2015 agenda. The paper suggests universal health coverage (UHC) as an inclusive umbrella for addressing these issues.

<http://uncsd.iisd.org/news/who-identifies-key-health-issues-for-post-2015-development-agenda/>

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS OF VANI



If you need any books, please write to us E-mail : [info@vaniindia.org](mailto:info@vaniindia.org)





## VANI Activities : Sept. - Oct. 2012

**4-7 September 2012** - IFP, AGNA & CIVICUS World Assembly in Montreal, Canada

**11-12 September 2012** - Eastern Regional Workshop on State of Voluntary Organizations - Opportunities and Challenges at Kolkata, West Bengal

**14 September 2012** - Meeting with G.V.V Sarma Joint Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, to discuss the issue of FCRA cancellations.

**20 September 2012** - Pre AGM Working Committee Meeting at SSK, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

**21 September 2012** - VOICE 2012, Annual General Body Meeting at SSK, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

**8-9 October 2012** - Consultation on State of Voluntary Organizations Challenges and Opportunities - Uttara-khand

**12 October 2012** - Meeting with Mr. Christophe Masson, Desk India, Asia and Pacific, Directorate General for Development and Cooperation, European Commission on the initiatives of the European Commission with Civil Society in the world, present an overview of the characteristics of Indian Civil Society to Mr Masson as well as the legal environment that structures the work of CSOs in India.

**15 October 2012** - Working Committee Meeting, New Delhi

**17 October 2012** - Meeting with Mr. G VV Sarma, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs

**26 October 2012** - Consultation with Local Partners - Partnership purpose and Partnership program focus at Kolkata



**28 October 2012** - One day state level consultation on Income Tax, FCRA & DTC - UPVAN, Lucknow,

**30 October 2012** - Country Strategic Plan (2013-17) - Child Fund, New Delhi.

## Forthcoming VANI Activities

**17 December 2012** - Half day consultation on "Income Tax", Helpage India, New Delhi

**18-19 December 2012** - South Regional Workshop, Indian Social Institute, Bangalore

**21 December 2012** - Half Day Meeting of academicians and researchers to discuss the methodology to be

adopted for the study entitled, "Status of Voluntary Sector in India.

**27 December 2012** - One day Meeting on, "National Law for Voluntary Sector", National Foundation for India, New Delhi



## My Experience with the Voluntary Sector

— *Leander Toppo, Wada Na Todo Abhiyan*

I used to hear a lot about the voluntary sector while I was doing my post graduation in Kerala, but absolutely I had no idea or understanding about the sector until I joined Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (WNTA) in 2008. Since then, it has been a roller-coaster ride with the sector. It would be dishonest from my side if I state that my experience with the voluntary sector has been 'extraordinary' and 'incredible'. By and large, I would term, with a reasonable sense of confidence that my rendezvous with the sector as something positive as I have been part of some useful programmes for the poor and marginalized in the country. In this context, I should also admit that I have been fortunate to get associated with a successful national campaign like Wada Na Todo Abhiyan

The sector has done tremendous work towards bridging the gap between the poor, the marginalized and the

“  
***We criticize the corporate sector for being selfish and extremely profit-oriented and we also throw stones at the the government for not fulfilling its promise. But we forget to remember, at times, that we are also sitting in the glass houses.***  
 ”

socially excluded with the policy makers and thereby, bringing growth and development in the country. Through participatory and rights based approach it tries to enable and enhance the capacities of the community towards bringing awareness, empowerment and development.

As I joined WNTA, one of my initial responsibilities was to build the network, groups and partners across India. It has been challenging however, very exciting to work in a team. It is here I began my work in the voluntary sector with lot of expectations, promises and interest. Some were fulfilled and some I believe will be fulfilled as I move ahead.

On the flip side, just like any other man-made institutions, the sector too has its own issues. Personally, I feel that this sector is grappling with lot of competition with regard to visibility, funding and space. For many NGOs and civil society organizations, it is a huge platform to use their own development rather than the development for whom it is envisaged and planned. They hire employee /consultant with minimum salary and expect them to work 24X7. On one hand we criticize the corporate sector for being selfish and extremely profit-oriented and on the other hand we also throw stones at the government for not fulfilling its promise. But we forget to remember, at times, that we are also sitting in the glass houses.

The reason why there is disparity and inequality in the country is because we don't bother about the poor and about their development. It's a systemic problem that has disillusioned the world and our country today. Most of the professional colleges produce professionals with profit orientation. Most of the professional graduates are restless towards earning money and building their career.

While looking ahead, I experience mixed feelings. There are tremendous opportunities or the voluntary sector to make its impact possible in days to come. Its role and function can never be exhausted. However, on an equal footing, I am afraid how much care we take to ensure that we stay on the right course. Very often, we are grappling with our own internal issues and problems and this can only get further complicated with the changing external environment for the voluntary sector.

Nevertheless, I am hopeful that we have enough visionaries and leaders in the sector and with a collective effort, we shall certainly overcome the obstacles that might confront us as we move forward.

— *Leander Toppo has been associated with Wada Na Todo Abhiyan for the last four years. The views expressed here are personal*